

Discover Geocaching – A Modern Day Treasure Hunt

Information on geocaching and cache locations can be found on the official geocaching Web site, www.geocaching.com. All of the caches have a description and a difficulty rating. Beginning cachers should select a cache with an easy rating so they know what to look for with future caches. Approximately 1 million caches are hidden worldwide, so there are plenty to choose from.

A geocache can be hidden just about anywhere – inside a hollow tree, under a rock, hanging from a tree branch along a hiking trail or in a very busy area in places you might not think would hold a cache.

Steve Hartwig, a child protection specialist in the Child Safety Branch at the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, has been geocaching for three years and is enjoying every aspect of the popular pastime. Hartwig has located more than 1,500 caches.

“I started geocaching in June 2007 when my son and I went to the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch in New Mexico. While my son was attending his programs, I took a course in geocaching and scouting and was hooked,” said Hartwig. “I have now integrated geocaching as part of my wellness and fitness program and am no longer a couch potato watching TV for hours.”

Depending on their size, caches usually consist of a waterproof container of some sort, a log book to record the finder’s visit and small trinkets to exchange. Very small caches, called micros, are so small that they only contain a log; so be sure to bring along a pen or pencil to sign the log. Caching etiquette requires the cacher to leave an item of equal or greater value than the item exchanged inside the cache. Kids love hunting through the cache container to view all of the items. Once you locate a cache and sign the log, replace the cache where you found it so others can enjoy the thrill of the adventure in finding it. Be sure to log your find on the Web site and list any details of your find there also.

“Geocaching gets me out into the community wherever my personal or business travels take me, and I visit places I never knew existed,” said Hartwig. “It also provides me with an opportunity to learn about local history, geology, geography and even philosophy on a personal level.”

There are many different types of caches to choose from. The traditional cache lists the coordinates and you can go and find it. Mystery or puzzle caches require you to solve a puzzle in order to obtain the coordinates first. Multi-caches involve two or more coordinates, with the final location holding the physical container.

“When I search for geocaches, I am constantly testing my skills in observation, deduction, GPS navigation and most importantly, patience,” said Hartwig.

Local geocaching clubs host events such as meet-and-greets and trash clean-ups. These events are a great way to meet new people, network with local geocachers and share your adventure stories.

“Geocaching is also a great opportunity for my son (who has multiple special needs) and I to do something together that we both enjoy,” said Hartwig. “He has younger eyes than I do and is really good at spotting the smaller geocaches.”

The weather doesn’t hamper Hartwig either.

“I cache in the rain, snow, sleet, mud, briar patches, even caching at night! The local geocaching community is great. There is an opportunity to meet other cachers at monthly events to discuss where the best caches are located and to get tips on finding difficult caches. Geocaching is definitely a great family activity.”